

The following listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (original) A method of measuring the ability of a compound to alter HCV activity using a beta-lactamase reporter system comprising the steps of:
 - a) combining together said compound, a screening cell and a beta-lactamase substrate under conditions supporting beta-lactamase activity, wherein said screening cell harbors a first HCV replicon comprising a selection sequence and a second HCV replicon comprising a nucleotide sequence encoding a beta-lactamase; and
 - b) measuring the ability of said compound to alter beta-lactamase production.
2. – 17. (cancelled)
18. (original) A HCV replicon comprising a beta-lactamase reporter, wherein said replicon does not contain a sequence coding for resistance to an agent that inhibits cell growth.
19. (amended) A chimeric Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) replicon comprising ~~one or more at least two~~ HCV regions, wherein the regions are from different ~~from two or more~~ HCV strains, and wherein at least one of the regions is a HCV-1a 3' UTR.
20. (amended) The chimeric HCV replicon of claim 19, wherein at least one of said regions is consists of a non-structural region from a clinical isolate of HCV.
21. (amended) The chimeric HCV replicon of claim 19, wherein said HCV replicon consists of either a modified version of SEQ ID NO: 1 or a modified version of SEQ ID NO: 2, wherein said modified version of SEQ ID NO: 1 contains SEQ ID NO: 1 modified by replacing

the NS5B region with a NS5B region from a clinical isolate of HCV and said modified version of SEQ ID NO: 2 contains SEQ ID NO: 2 modified by replacing the NS5B region with a NS5B region from a clinical isolate of HCV.

22. – 26. (cancelled)

27. (new) The chimeric HCV replicon of claim 19, wherein at least one of the HCV regions consists of nucleotides from a consensus HCV sequence.

28. (new) The chimeric HCV replicon of claim 19, wherein said chimeric replicon comprises a beta-lactamase reporter.

29. (new) The chimeric HCV replicon of claim 28, wherein said replicon does not contain a sequence coding for resistance to an agent that inhibits cell growth.

30. (new) The chimeric HCV replicon of claim 20, wherein at least one of the HCV regions consists of nucleotides from a consensus HCV sequence.

31. (new) The chimeric HCV replicon of claim 20, wherein the non-structural region comprises a HCV polypeptide selected from the group consisting of NS2/3 protease, NS3 protease, NS3 helicase, and NS5B polymerase.

32. (new) The chimeric HCV replicon of claim 31, wherein the HCV polypeptide is NS5B.

33. (new) The chimeric HCV replicon of claim 20, wherein said chimeric replicon comprises a beta-lactamase reporter.

34. (new) The chimeric HCV replicon of claim 33, wherein said replicon does not contain a sequence coding for resistance to an agent that inhibits cell growth.

35. (new) The chimeric HCV replicon of claim 20, wherein said replicon comprises restriction sites not present in naturally occurring HCV that are located about 3' and about 5' from an HCV target region, wherein said restriction sites do not affect replicon activity.
36. (new) The chimeric HCV replicon of claim 35, wherein said restriction sites are silent with respect to amino acid coding.
37. (new) The chimeric HCV replicon of claim 35, wherein said chimeric replicon comprises a beta-lactamase reporter.
38. (new) The chimeric HCV replicon of claim 37, wherein said replicon does not contain a sequence coding for resistance to an agent that inhibits cell growth.
39. (new) A chimeric HCV replicon of SEQ ID NOs: 1 or 2, wherein at least a portion of nucleotides encoding a non-structural HCV polypeptide is replaced by a corresponding portion of nucleotides from a clinical isolate of HCV.
40. (new) The chimeric HCV replicon of claim 40, wherein the non-structural HCV polypeptide is selected from the group consisting of NS2/3 protease, NS3 protease, NS3 helicase, and NS5B polymerase.
41. (new) The chimeric HCV replicon of claim 40, wherein the non-structural HCV polypeptide is NS5B.
42. (new) The chimeric HCV replicon of claim 40, wherein said replicon does not contain a sequence coding for resistance to an agent that inhibits cell growth.
43. (new) A chimeric HCV replicon consisting of SEQ ID NOs:1 or 2.